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# AFGHANISTAN

## SNAPSHOT

# Women Work Safely at Home

**A canal project gives females alternative work and income to care for their families**



USAID/CDP/CADG

*Afghan Gull weaves wire on a gabion cage in a community building near her home.*

***Women working on the project can work at home while looking after their families.***

Traditionally, rural Afghan women rarely work outside their homes, but years of war and disease have left many households without a primary breadwinner

Strict societal rules keep women at home, taking care of children, cooking, and caring for the family. In addition to tending to the household and the family, widows have been forced to seek employment to meet basic family needs such as food and shelter. When they work, they rarely mix with men and often face threats of violence for not adhering to traditional female roles.

In Badghis Province, a canal rehabilitation program was planned to restore much of the canal work that diverted water from the Bala Murghab River into vital farmlands. Implemented by Central Asia Development Group, the USAID-funded project was designed to hire more than 1,100 workers to clear the canals and included provisions to hire women for specific tasks.

Afghan Gull was one of the 123 women that were hired. Many of the women selected lost their husbands in conflicts, but have large families to support. Gull previously worked in the Bala Murghab District Hospital, teaching other women basic health rules. However, she received constant threats from insurgents about working outside the home. Along with many of the other female hospital workers, Gull decided to stop working or face retribution. Local *shura* leaders cooperating with USAID agreed that women could work on the project on the condition that they not work outside the home. Thus, Gull, and many other women, were put to the task of making gabion cages – wire boxes that are filled with large rocks and used to make retaining walls.

“We still receive threats about working, but I can do this in my home and earn enough to take care of my family,” says Gull. “The other women and I have to make money or face starvation. Our lives are hard, but we are happy to do this job. At least now I can work in the safety of my home.”